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SIPDIS

NEA FOR FRONT OFFICE AND IPA. NSC FOR SHAPIRO/KUMAR. JOINT STAFF FOR LTGEN SELVA

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SUBJECT: YESHA COUNCIL CHAIRMAN DISCUSSES COUNCIL MEETINGS AND CURRENT SETTLER SENTIMENT

REF: A. 08 JERUSALEM 1987

[B.](#) JERUSALEM 661

Classified By: Consul General Jake Walles, per reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

[¶](#)1. (C) Summary. The YESHA Council held an expanded meeting in January at which it established a Secretariat of ten former Council leaders and a core group of 25 Council members, which will meet every two months. The expanded Council, with over 200 members, will meet only two or three times per year. The YESHA Council Chairman said that the settler community is waiting for the new Israeli government's policy on settlement expansion, and feels more confident that they are represented in the new GOI. End summary.

YESHA Council Chairman Summary of Council Meetings

[¶](#)2. (C) On April 22, YESHA Council Chairman Dani Dayan briefed Poloff on the first expanded YESHA Council meeting (ref A) in January 2009, and on plans for subsequent meetings. Dayan said the January meeting, attended by over 100 of more than 200 elected (or appointed) settlement representatives, dealt with Council procedures, and did not address substantive issues. He said the Council established a Secretariat of ten former Council leaders, and a core group comprised of the ten Secretariat members plus 15 additional "elders," including Rabbi Elyakim Levanon of Elon More and Yigal Cohen, Chairman of Ariel "University Center." (Note: Levanon was one of the rabbinical signatories to a campaign in late 2008 calling on Israelis to stop employing Palestinians, whom he called "the Arab enemy." End note.) Dayan said several important settler "elders" such as Elyakim Haetzni (co-founder of Kiryat Arba settlement) declined to be a part of the YESHA Council, saying it is "too moderate" for them.

[¶](#)3. (C) According to Dayan, this core group of 25 Council members will meet every two months, while the expanded Council will meet two or three times per year. Dayan will remain Chairman of the Council, and Pinchas Wallerstein will remain Director General. Dayan admitted that the expanded Council is difficult to control, with members speaking out of turn to share their opinions. He said he will encourage greater discipline in the next meeting, which is scheduled to take place in June, and Dayan will set the meeting agenda. He said the most pressing issues currently facing the YESHA Council are the proposed dismantlement of Migron outpost, and legal challenges such as NGO Yesh Din's pending Israeli High Court of Justice (HCJ) case against Ofra.

Settlers Waiting for GOI Policy on Settlement Expansion

[¶](#)4. (C) Dayan said the settler community is waiting for the

new Israeli government to determine its policy with regard to settlement expansion, but they are more confident of their representation in the GOI, noting that ten MKs and two ministers (Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman and Minister of Telecommunications Yuli Edelstein) live in settlements, and several other MKs and ministers strongly support settlement expansion (ref B). He said the settlers' vote was split between Israeli political parties, with most supporting Likud, Ichud Leumi (National Union), Yisrael Beitanu (Israel is Our Home), Habayit Hayehudi (Jewish Home), or Shas. Dayan said he was active in the Habayit Hayehudi party, but left the party during the recent Israeli elections when "they became too religious," saying he "was not comfortable there."

He voted for Likud, though he is not a party member. He opined that Habayit Hayehudi, which split acrimoniously with Ichud Leumi over ideological differences, will become more mainstream and eventually merge with Likud, while Ichud Leumi will remain a minority party supported by radical settlers.

WALLES